CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	LUL – Installation of a 24' buried irrigation pipeline.
Proposed Implementation Date:	Fall 2011 / Spring 2012
Proponent:	Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company, PO Box 245, Valier, MT 59486
Location:	Sec 16, T30N, R2W
County:	Pondera
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The applicant as applied for permission to install 24" underground irrigation pipeline and a water control outlet structure on state land. The buried pipeline will be used to convey canal company irrigation water across state land. The scope of this project includes abandoning an existing ditch and rerouting irrigation water into an underground pipeline. The project will create several environmental benefits including: eliminating erosion and head cutting along ditches, reduce saline seep problems in the area, and increase efficiency of irrigation water delivery. Following installation, the applicant will apply for an easement for the pipeline based upon "as built" survey.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

DNRC
USDA - NRCS
Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Co

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

USDA – NRCS EQIP (program) will be cost sharing the project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: Approve the LUL.

No Action Alternative: No action. Do not approve the LUL.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils are suitable for pipeline installation. The majority of the pipeline will occur on classified agricultural land. The project will eliminate irrigation water delivery though a surface ditch. Irrigation water will be placed in an underground pipeline and reduce soil erosion and saline seeps in the area. All disturbed areas along the pipeline route will be reclaimed and returned to production. This project is expected to benefit soil quality and stability. No long term negative impacts on soils resources are expected.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

The proposed action will increase water quality and water quantity. Pondera Canal Company has necessary water rights to provide irrigation water.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposed action will not impact air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The pipeline crosses approximately 100 feet of native rangeland. The remainder of the project is located on classified agricultural land. Native rangeland portions will be reclaimed and reseeded with native seed. Agricultural land is currently harvested and in stubble. Following installation, all disturbed areas will be reclaimed and returned to production.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to “normal” (pre-action usage) following the completion of the project. The proposed livestock water project will also provide a reliable water source for wildlife.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

The proposed pipeline project does not include any activities which would alter any habitat, so no effects are expected in either alternative. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for this area and 1 species of special concern were identified.

Birds – Burrowing Owl and Bald Eagle. These species are not known to utilize this tract and therefore the project is not expected to impact these species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The water line installation route was surveyed and no cultural resource items were located. The majority of this project is located on classified agricultural land, where if any archaeological features were present, have been previously destroyed by farming operations. In addition, the site was further reviewed by the NRCS's archaeologist prior to the installation of the water line. NRCS has completed a negative findings report and state that no cultural resources are present in the project area.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Pipeline will be buried. Not long term changes to the aesthetic character of the land will occur.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

Currently, there are no other studies, plans, or projects associated with the proposed project area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed LUL will not affect human health or human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed pipeline will benefit state land by reduction soil erosion and saline seep areas. State Land and the surface lessees (JGL Farms) farm and ranch operations will benefit from this project. This action will positively impact agricultural activities within the area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

This project will be installed by local contractors and the Pondera Canal and Reservoir Company employees, which will benefit area employment.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will slightly increase local and State tax revenues.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

This project will not require additional governmental services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action is in compliance with other State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This state land tract is in a rural area and legally accessible to the public. The proposed action will not create conflict s with general recreational activities within the area.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

The proposed action will not change the human population distribution or the housing requirements in the area.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

The proposed action will not alter the social structure of surrounding native communities.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or the cultural diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The project is being cost shared by the USDA-NRCS EQIP program. The school trust will receive a one-time rental fee of $250.00 for installation and easement fees in the future.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Erik Eneboe	Date: November 29, 2011
	Title:	Conrad Unit Manager, CLO, DNRC	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Approve the land Use License to install the buried irrigation pipeline and abandon the irrigation ditch.

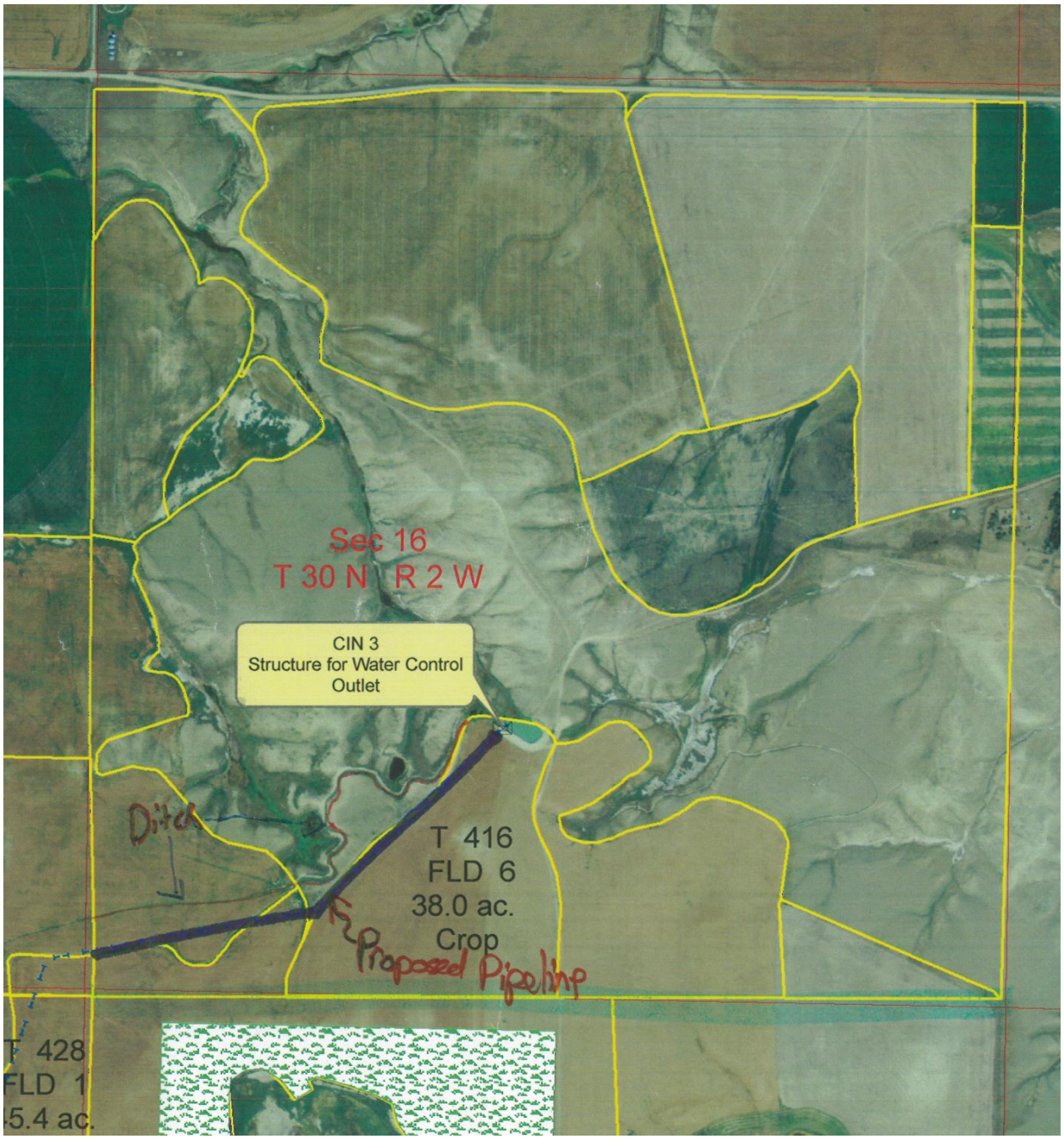
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not expected to occur as a result of the proposed activity. There are no unique or limited habitats associated with the project area and overall, soil erosion, water efficiency and saline seep problems will be addressed by implementing the proposal.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐	EIS	☐	More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Garry Williams
	Title:	Area Manager, CLO, DNRC
Signature:		**Date**: March 24, 2005


Sec 16
T 30 N R 2 W
CIN 3
Structure for Water Control
Outlet
Ditch
T 416
FLD 6
38.0 ac.
Crop
Proposed Pipeline
T 428
FLD 1
5.4 ac.